

State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC)

1900 Williams Street - P.O. Box 4789

Helena, MT 59604-4789

Telephone: (406) 841-3911 Fax: (406) 841-3966

Situation Report for August 20, 2007

(issued @ 1500 hrs.)



2007 FIRES

Report Includes:

- Background Information
 - Fire Restrictions & Closures
 - Air Quality
 - Road Closures/Travel Restrictions
- Current Incident Situation
- New Large Fires
- Weather
- State Declarations
- Local & Tribal Declarations
- Local Government & Tribal Emergency Operations
- Requests for State Financial Assistance

- Fire Management Assistance Grants
- EMAC Resources Committed
- Summary of State Resources Committed

Important Websites:

State of Montana Fire Information:

<http://mt.gov/fire.asp>

National Interagency Fire Center

http://www.nifc.gov/fire_info/nfn.htm

Northern Rockies Coordination Center

<http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/>

Inciweb -- Incident Information System

<http://www.inciweb.org/state/27/>

I. Background Information

Since June, hot and dry weather has dominated the region creating very high to extreme fire conditions. Fire Indices are at an all time high while fuel moistures are low. Accompanying the high indices are weather patterns that have set the conditions for lightning and lightning caused starts. High pressure weather patterns over the region are responsible for the high temperatures and little to no moisture. Occasional cold fronts push through the region causing severe lightning storms that ignite wildfires. Rain has accompanied some of these fronts but a return to a high pressure system mitigates any moisture that fell.

Long Range Predictions

Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for most of the Area during August. Fuel moisture conditions should improve during the September through November time period except for eastern Montana. In many areas across western Montana and northern Idaho, downed dead woody fuel moistures are drier than normal and Energy Release Component indices are running near or above record levels and well ahead of normal for this time of year. The Climate Prediction Center's forecast calls for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation during August, especially over western portions of the Area. Wind

events are likely to increase during August as well. Abundant fine fuels are rapidly curing in eastern Montana and will likely increase the probability for large fire problems during August and into the fall months.

Fire Contracting: Inquiries regarding contracting fire equipment and other fire resources should be directed to the interested party's local dispatch center or Geographic Area Coordination Center see:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/fire/nrcq/agree-contract/signup.html>

Fire Restrictions & Closures: Portions of the state are currently under Stage I or Stage II Fire Restrictions. For definitions of these restrictions, see:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stagel.pdf>

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stagell.pdf>

Fire Restrictions in Effect (for specific areas):

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/index.html>

Air Quality & Smoke: The Montana Department of Environmental Quality issues a daily forecast and discussion of potential smoke impacts throughout the state. The forecast can be accessed at <http://www.deq.state.mt.us/fireupdates/index.asp>.

Road Closures & Travel Restrictions: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/reports/alerts.shtml>

Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) Emergency Rules:

<http://sos.mt.gov/ARM/emergency/index.asp>

Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

[Current Fire Restrictions](#)

[Drought & Fire Updates](#)

[Drought & Fire News](#)

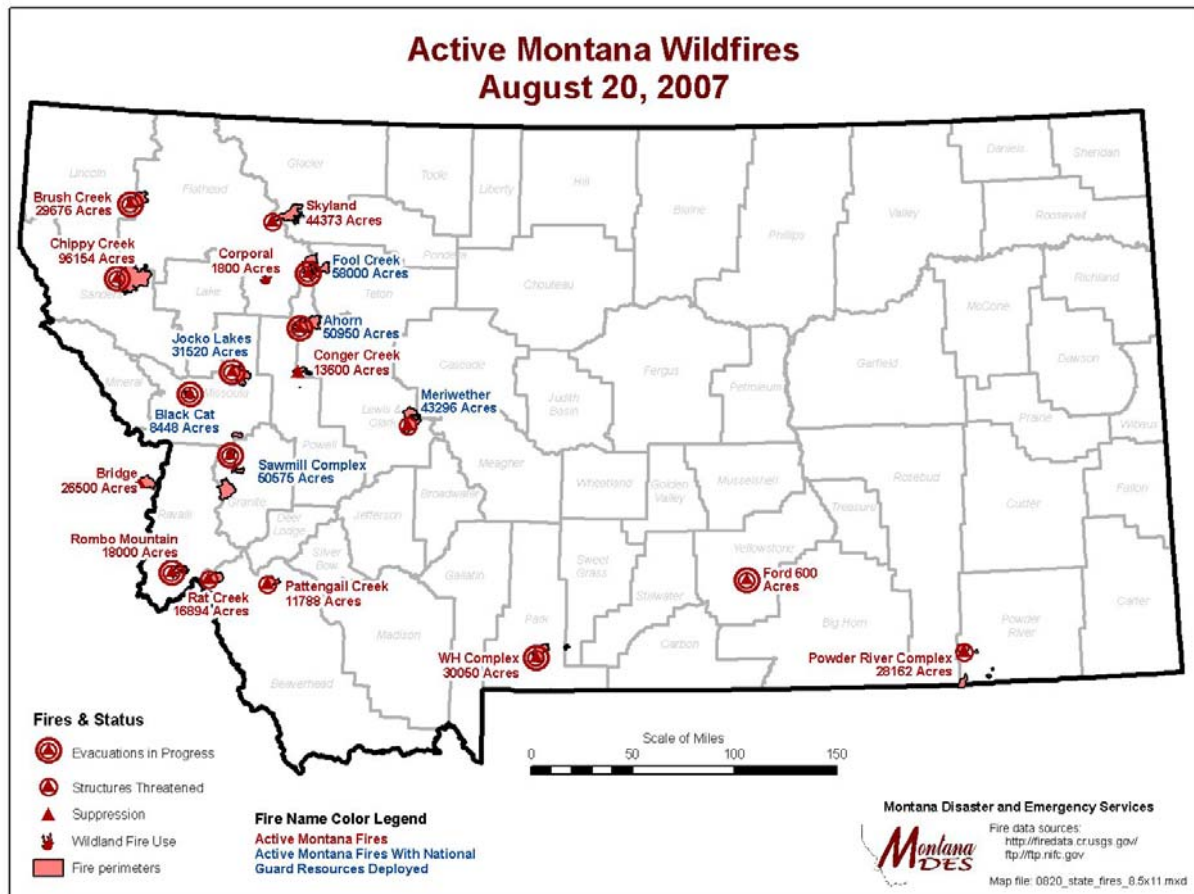
Department of Revenue

<http://mt.gov/revenue/forindividuals/taxrelieffordisaster.asp>

Department of Agriculture

<http://agr.mt.gov/crops/hayFirst.asp>

II. Current Incident Situation - Incidents listed according to current NRCG priority. (This report includes summary information for Montana fires that are currently greater than 100 acres in size. Fires are being dropped from this report once they reach 100% containment.) We have included a link to fire perimeters for the several of the incidents: http://dma.mt.gov/des/Fire_Perimeter_Maps.asp.



Currently assigned to Montana incidents are:

Area Command Teams	-	1
Type 1 IMT's	-	6
Type 2 IMT's	-	5
Fire Use Management Teams	-	3

The Area Command Team (Zimmerman) that had been assigned to Northern Rockies Coordination Center (Missoula) is now reassigned to help with incident prioritization and resources allocation for fires in Southwestern Montana.

Black Cat is located between Highway 93 and Mill Creek, approximately 2 miles SW of Evaro, Montana. Martin's Type 1 IMT is assigned (under Unified Command with Frenchtown FD). Current size is 8,448 acres with 12% containment. Approximately 431 personnel are assigned, plus mutual aid resources from local fire departments. **A total of seven (7) unoccupied structures were lost, but at this time, no primary residences have been reported as destroyed.** On the Frenchtown side of the fire, evacuations along Mill Creek Road (above and including Spring Hill Road) are still in effect. The community of Evaro was

evacuated last night. Highway 93 was closed temporarily. A high value railroad trestle is threatened. An American Red Cross Shelter remains opened at the DeSmet Elementary School. A second shelter has been established on the north end of the closure at the Arlee Community Center at 248 Powwow Road on the east side of Highway 93. **Community Meeting:** A fire information meeting will be held Monday, August 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Frenchtown High School. Fire and law enforcement authorities will be present to provide an update on the fire situation and answer questions.

Jocko Lakes started on CSKT lands (Flathead Agency, BIA), twenty-six miles NE of Missoula; 8 miles W of Seeley Lake. Wilcox's Type 1 IMT is in command of the incident. Wilcox's IMT is also managing the Ovando Point Fire. The Jocko Lakes Fire is 31,520 acres and 25% contained. Personnel assigned: 1,069. Community of Seeley Lake, surrounding area, Pyramid Lumber Mill and cell tower are threatened. Evacuations are in effect. The Missoula County Sheriff's Office has issued a mandatory, precautionary evacuation order for all of the Placid Lake area on 8/19/07. HWY 83 is opened to through traffic. Structures (8) have been lost.

*A **Fire Information Hotline** has been established at the Missoula County Fire Information Call Center from **9:00 am to 9:00 pm** at: **(406)258-3680**. A **24 hour recorded message can be found at (406) 258-4271**.*

Chippy Creek is located forty-two miles southwest of Kalispell, and 24 miles N of Thompson Falls, MT (Northwestern Land Office, Montana DNRC). Bennett's Type 1 IMT is in command. Size is 96,154 acres with 30% containment. Personnel assigned: 659. Numerous homes remain threatened. Evacuations and Area Closures remain in effect.

Sawmill Complex (4 fires) is located on the Lolo, Bitterroot and Beaverhead – Deerlodge National Forests. The four fires in this complex extend from approximately 22 miles SE of Missoula to an area approximately 23 miles WSW of Phillipsburg, MT. The complex includes a total of 50,575 acres with 10% containment. The complex consists of the Sawmill Creek (7,800 ac), the Wyman #2 (33,356 ac), the Fisher Point (9,419 ac), and the Signal Rock 07 (300 ac) fires. McNitt's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: 466. Numerous residences and other structures remain threatened. Use Restrictions and Road Closures are in effect within the Rock Creek drainage. Re-evacuated all of Rock Creek between MM 2 and MM 25 and also evacuated the residents of Upper Willow Creek.

A community fire information meeting is scheduled for lower Rock Creek residents at the Elkhorn Lodge on Monday, August 20 at 7:00 pm.

A community fire information meeting is scheduled for upper Rock Creek residents at the Clark Ranch on Wednesday August 21 at 7:30 pm

Rombo Mountain is located in the Bitterroot NF. The fire is located eighteen miles south of Darby, MT. Svalberg's Fire Use Management Team is assigned. A Type 1 IMT (Quisenberry) is transitioning on the incident today which will be combined into the BBD Complex. Estimated size is 18,000 acres with 0% containment. Personnel assigned: 219. Transition of command for the Bitterroot Fire Use Complex (16 Wildland Fire Use fires encompassing approximately 9,000 acres) occurred this morning to Perkins FUMT.

Residences, Painted Rocks State Park and other commercial property remain threatened. Evacuations are in effect. Precautionary evacuation notices (stage 1) have been issued along the East Fork of the Bitterroot. Area closures remain in effect for areas around Rombo Mountain and W of West Fork Road. **A public meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 20th at the Sula Clubhouse at 6:30 for an update about this and other fires on the Bitterroot. Residents can get up-to-date information about these evacuations by calling the Ravalli County Evacuation Hotline at 375-6650.**

Rat Creek is located on the Beaverhead/Deerlodge NF, twenty-five miles west of Wisdom, MT. Molhoek's Type 2 IMT (also managing the Pattengail Creek Fire) is assigned. The fire is now 16,894 acres and is 0% contained. Personnel assigned: 262. Structures are threatened. Park buildings, infrastructure, and cultural resources in the Big Hole National Battlefield are threatened. Other evacuations are in effect. A closure of the Tie Creek and Placer Creek road systems remains in effect. Highway 43 could be impacted.

Fool Creek on the Lewis and Clark and Flathead National Forests, approximately 30 miles NW of Choteau. Fire is now 58,000 acres with 0% containment. Personnel assigned: 142. Lineback's FUMT is assigned and is also managing the Ahorn Fire. Several outbuildings, including a ski resort remain threaten (7 outbuildings have burned). Evacuations and road closures remain in effect.

WH Complex – These fires are located 27 miles S of Livingston, and 10 miles SE of Emigrant, MT. Total size of the complex is 30,050 acres with 20% containment. Stanich's Type 1 IMT is assigned. Personnel Assigned: 476. Structures remain threatened, area closures are in effect, and evacuations are still in place. Stillwater Mine is update once or twice a day.

Brush Creek is located on the Flathead NF, twenty-five miles west of Whitefish, MT. Brush Creek is 29,676 acres with 85% containment. Hill's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: 568. Residences and outbuildings remain threatened. Good Creek community may be evacuated if the fire grows.

Skyland is located on the Flathead NF near Summit. Pendleton's Type 1 IMT is assigned. Heintz's Type 2 IMT will be transitioning with Pendleton's Team today. The Skyland Fire is 44,373 acres with 51% containment. Personnel assigned: 512. Two structures are confirmed lost, numerous residences remain threatened. Evacuations for all areas have been reduced to Level 1.

Meriwether located on the Helena National Forest in and around the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness. Carpenter's Type 3 organization is assigned. Current size is estimated at 43,296 acres with 75% containment. Personnel Assigned: 132. No structures are currently threatened.

Ahorn Fire on the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Lewis and Clark County is being managed Lineback's Team and they are also managing the Ahorn Fire. Current size is estimated at 50,950 acres and is 6% contained. Personnel Assigned: 258. Structure protection for residences and guest ranches in the Benchmark, Gibson, and Sun Canyon areas continue.



Ford Road* is in the Lockwood area in Yellowstone County. The Ford Fire is a DNRC assist to Yellowstone County. Chief Bill Rash is the Incident Commander. The Ford Fire is estimated to be 600 acres with 0% containment. Personnel assigned: 26. Cause: Under Investigation. Evacuations are in effect. A Red Cross Evacuation Shelter is open at the Lockwood School.

Structures are threatened. Structures are reported to have been destroyed.

Corporal is 18 miles east of Swan Lake on the Flathead NF. The Corporal Fire is 1,800 acres and 0% contained. A Type 3 IC is assigned. Personnel assigned: Not Reported. Cause: Lightning. One structure is threatened.

Conger Creek on the Lolo National Forest, approximately 20 miles north of Ovando. The fire is 13,600 acres with 0% containment. Doebling (Type 3 IC) is assigned with 23 personnel. 13 outbuildings are threatened.

Pattengail Creek on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF, 10 miles NE of Wisdom. The Pattengail Creek Fire is 11,788 acres and 15% contained. Molhoek's Type 2 IMT (also managing the Rat Creek Fire) is assigned; with 89 personnel. 12 structures could be threatened.

Powder River Complex (13 fires) is thirty five miles southeast of Ashland. Johnson's Type 2 IMT is assigned. The complex is 28,162 acres with 100% contained. Personnel assigned: 297. No structures are currently threatened (2 structures have burned).

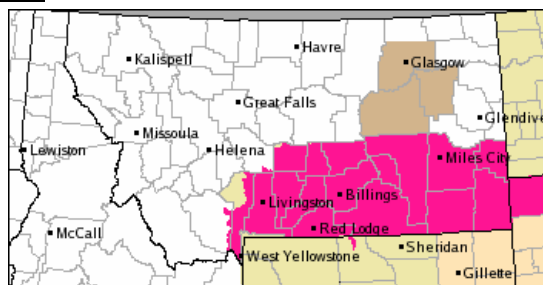
*** NEW FIRES (Emerging Extended Attack Fires over 100 acres in size)**

III. Weather

Red Flag Warnings and/or Fire Weather Watches:

Today the National Weather Service office in Billings has issued a **Red Flag Warnings** for areas of south central and eastern Montana for gusty winds and low humidities.

Definitions of a Fire Weather Watch and a Red Flag Warning:



A fire weather watch or red flag warning is issued when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions support extreme fire danger. These products are written for land and fire managers to highlight the increased fire danger.

A fire weather watch is issued up to 72 hours before the above conditions are expected to occur.

A red flag warning is issued when the conditions above are occurring or expected to occur within the next 24 hours. <http://www.weather.gov/>

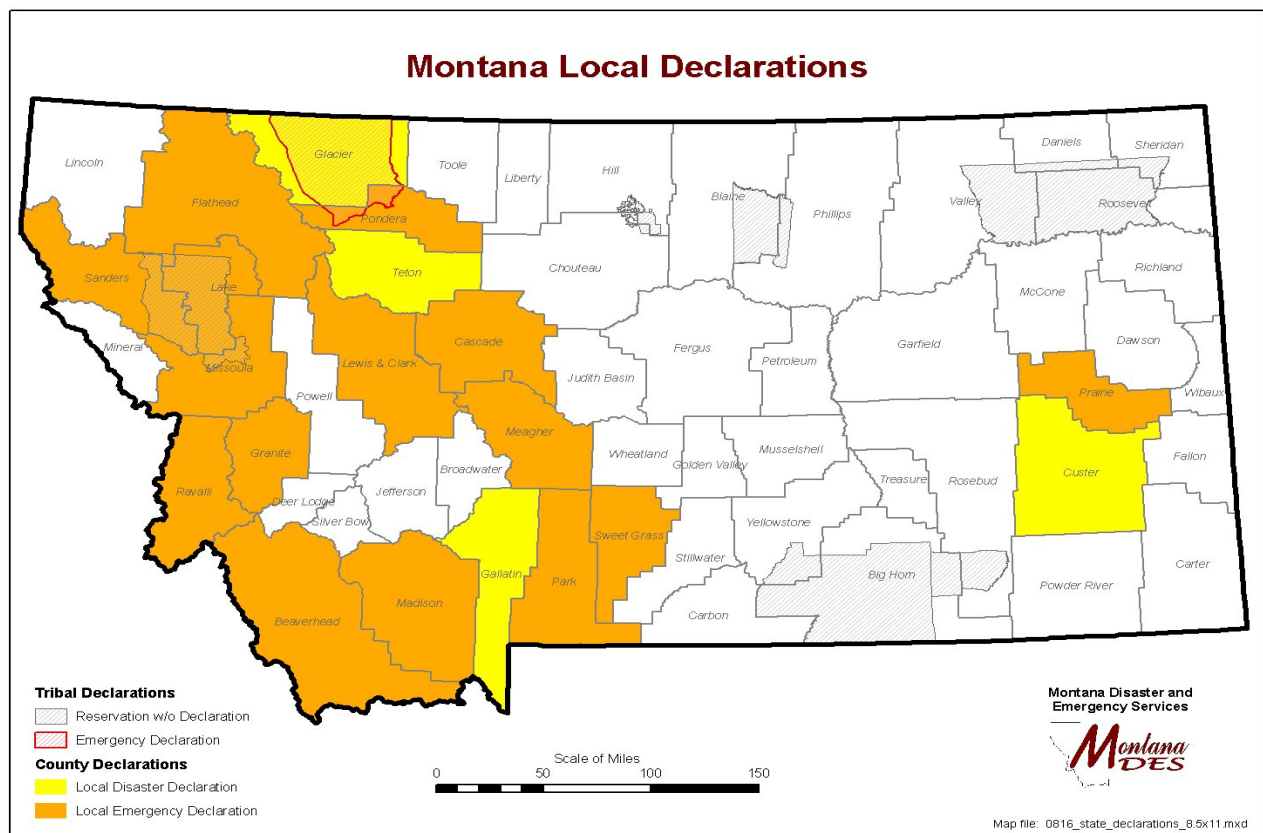
Weather Forecast For current Fire Weather Predictions, see the Daily Outlook at:
http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/daily_outlook.pdf

Fire Behavior Forecast For current Fire Behavior Predictions, see:
http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/fire_behavior/fire_behavior.pdf

IV. State Declarations

- Statewide Declaration of a Wildland Fire Emergency

V. Local and Tribal Declarations



- **State of Emergency.** The following jurisdictions have declared a state of emergency:

Lewis and Clark	Ravalli
Lake	Granite
Cascade	Missoula
Flathead	Sanders
Prairie	Beaverhead
Pondera	Blackfeet Nation
Sweet Grass	Park
Madison	Meagher

- **Disaster Declaration.** The following jurisdictions have declared a wildfire disaster:

Teton	Gallatin
Glacier	Custer

VI. Jurisdictional Emergency Operations

- The Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operation Center was activated on July 19, 2007.
- The Flathead County Emergency Operations Center was activated on August 2, 2007.
- The Teton County Emergency Operations Center was activated on August 2, 2007.
- The Missoula County Emergency Operations Center is activated. Missoula County has a call center in place for public information. The phone number is 406-258-3680.
- The Granite County Emergency Operations Center has been activated.
- The Sanders County Emergency Operations Center is activated but mobile in the area of the Chippy Creek Fire.
- The Sweet Grass County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 8/12/07.
- The Powder River County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 8/14/07.
- The Yellowstone County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 8/19/07.

VII. Requests for State Financial Assistance

- N/A

VIII. Fire Management Assistance Grants

- Jocko Lakes FEMA-2718FM-MT approved 8/4/07
- Black Cat FEMA-2721FM-MT approved 8/16/07
- Ford Road FEMA-2723FM-MT approved 8/19/07

IX. Emergency Management Assistance Compact Resources Committed

- EMAC A-Team is assigned to the MT State Emergency Coordination Center.
- Two HEMTT aviation refuelers from Colorado National Guard are in Helena to support the Montana Army National Guard.

X. Summary of State Resources Committed (through the SECC)

- MT-DES currently has two employees deployed with Incident Management Teams (through the Northern Rockies Coordination Center).
- Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk modules have been deployed for initial attack to:
 - Kalispell
 - Missoula
 - Helena
- One Montana Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook and module has been deployed to assist with fire support on the Meriwether Fire.
- Montana National Guard Security Teams have been assigned to:
 - Meriwether Fire
 - Sawmill Complex
 - Jocko Lake (2 teams)
 - Fool Creek Fire
 - Black Cat Fire (a second team has been ordered)
- Montana Highway Patrol resources are assigned (as requested) to assist in traffic control and law enforcement support of large fires.
- Starting on July 20, 2007, at 0700 the SECC was staffed and activated to a Level III status with extended hours (0700-1900), seven days a week. The SECC remains at Level III. Outside of those hours, the MT DES staff Duty Officer is available 24 hrs and may be reached at (406) 841-3911.